#### Refuse Haulers: Backing Accidents

Traditionally, backing accidents and the refuse industry have seemed to go hand in hand. In fact, backing accidents account for at least 25% of the overall accidents.

The most significant trend is that over half of the backing accidents resulted from a driver backing into a non-moving object that they did not see. These objects included poles, fences, parked autos, overhangs, fire hydrants, and other fixed objects. **These objects were present and clearly visible to the driver when they first arrived at the collection location – before they started backing.** This indicates that drivers are doing a poor job with the initial scanning of the collection location while they have the best view to see all potential backing hazards. While rear vision cameras are important tools in preventing backing accidents, there is no substitute for knowing the environment in which one is backing.

A much smaller number of backing accidents occurred when others (usually autos) moved into the insured’s backing path during the backing motion. While many of these accidents are determined not to be totally the fault of the refuse truck driver, these accidents indicate that drivers must use mirrors, windows, shadows, and reflections, and not rely solely on backing cameras to see anything moving into their backing path.

One disturbing finding was the number of backing accidents that resulted from the refuse truck driver backing in traffic situations. This often occurs due to missing a collection stop, missing a turn, or pulling too far into the intersection and trying to correct it by backing. Backing any vehicle in a traffic situation (especially where crosswalks are present) is dangerous, and backing a refuse vehicle, with its enormous rear blind spot, is clearly unsafe and unacceptable.

A small portion of backing accidents involved drivers backing into objects or vehicles that the driver was aware of, but misjudged the distance to the object or auto or the clearance the refuse vehicle would need. This shows a lack of experience on the part of the driver or unfamiliarity with the vehicle.

**Action Plan to Reduce Backing Accidents**

* **Establish a written company policy regarding proper backing procedures and safe backing.**
* **Establish a program of clandestine driver observations and/or supervisor ride-alongs with drivers to make sure that backing safety policies are being followed.**
* **Have safety meetings for all current drivers and establish a training session for all new drivers to make sure that all drivers are familiar with the company policies on backing and how to back a refuse truck safely. Because of the importance of this issue, a safety meeting on this topic should be held at least once a year.**
* **Frequently remind drivers of the importance of a safe backing. This can be accomplished with: bulletin board messages, paycheck stuffers, reminders during regular driver safety meetings, and periodic announcements over the radio.**
* **Structure routes and pickup locations to minimize backing whenever possible.**
* **Make sure that backing beepers, rear-vision cameras, and mirrors are in proper working order.**
* **Consider having backing cameras on all new truck purchases and retrofit current vehicles with backing cameras (for vehicles that can accommodate one). This is especially important for one-person routes.**
* **Make safety performance and compliance with safety policies part of a driver’s performance review and part of any safety incentive or bonus programs.**